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ABSTRACT

The reading and writing behavior of seven mildly mentally retarded and 12 moderately retarded adolescents was analyzed. Data were collected in the classroom on 11 language tasks, including drawing, forming letters and numbers, and performing general print production. Ss were also asked to answer historical/experiential questions and conceptual/qualitative questions about reading and writing. Ss' book handling knowledge and oral reading skills were also examined. Attitudes toward reading and writing, parental attitudes and models of reading, and the relationship between language and home environment was noted. Miscue analysis was also performed. Among research findings were that the home did not appear to be an instrumental factor in acquiring and using reading skills in the Ss; although all moderately retarded Ss could reproduce writing expected of them in a particular program, none could produce meaningful or original thought through written language; and the reading comprehension of the mildly retarded Ss was heavily dependent on sight word identification and utilization of the graphophonemic language cue system. Thirteen implications included the need to infuse a practical awareness of reading and writing in the home environment, the importance of meaningful reading and writing to students, and the value of observing adults, siblings, and friends gain pleasure from reading. (CL)

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The Responses to Written Language by Mildly and Moderately Mentally Retarded Adolescents

A Paper Presented to the 105th Annual Meeting of the American Association on Mental Deficiency, "A Decade of Change: From Rights to Realities."

Detroit, Michigan
May 29, 1981

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The Responses to Written Language by
Mildly and Moderately Mentally Retarded Adolescents

ABSTRACT

This investigation involved a comprehensive analysis of the reading and writing behavior of 19 randomly selected mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents currently enrolled in special education classes in an urban school district with a total population of over 150,000 students. Seven of the subjects were mildly mentally retarded and twelve subjects were moderately mentally retarded.

Utilizing an elaboration of a research paradigm suggested by Prehm and Altman (1976), all but parental data were obtained within the subjects' classrooms as an integral part of their normal language activities. Students' data were collected on 11 language tasks. These tasks included drawing, forming letters and numbers and general print production. Subjects were also requested to answer historical/experiential questions and conceptual/qualitative questions about reading and writing. Other tasks ascertained the subjects' book handling knowledge as well as oral reading abilities.

Interviews and surveys were conducted to determine subjects' attitudes toward reading and writing, parental attitudes and models of reading, and the interactive relationship between language and home environments. Subjects' miscue analyses (i.e. deviations from print) of their oral reading revealed how efficiently they utilized the syntactic, semantic, and grapho-phonemic language systems.

The results indicated that these adolescents' reading and writing behavior could be analyzed, categorized, and measured qualitatively within

a particular information processing/psycholinguistic paradigm.

The implications focused on the practical implementation of whole language instruction (Feldman, 1981; Feldman and Wiseman, 1980; Goodman, 1967, 1976; Goodman & Burke, 1980) and integrated activities into the urban secondary school curriculum and home environment for mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents.

Research Questions

1. Does home environment affect the reading and writing behavior of mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents?
2. Do mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents demonstrate an awareness of the written production of language by producing writing patterns?
3. How do mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents view the purpose of writing?
4. Do mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents demonstrate knowledge of spelling and graphophonemic relationships?
5. Do mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents demonstrate a developing awareness of written receptive language by exhibiting certain reading patterns?
6. How do mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents view the purposes of reading?
7. How do mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents describe the reading process?
8. What differences and similarities are evidenced in mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents' written language behavior?
9. Is the reading comprehension of mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents, as measured by retelling, dependent on word identification?
10. Does the reading of mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents in this study emphasize the use of any one of the language cues systems of syntax, semantics, or graphophonemics?
11. Do the mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescent readers in this study produce a high percentage of semantically acceptable miscues?

12. Do the mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescent readers in this study produce a high percentage of semantically unacceptable, but corrected miscues?

Research Answers

1. Without regard to its etiology, the home does not appear to be an instrumental factor in the acquisition and utilization of reading skills for this group of mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents. The interview data also suggest that the adolescents in this study were not able to recognize the importance of reading through their interaction with the home environment.
2. In this study all moderately mentally retarded adolescents demonstrated some capacity to reproduce writing expected of them in a particular instructional program. They could write their first and last names, addresses, city and state, date, alphabet (upper and lower case), isolated letters, and isolated sight words (usually in list form). However, none of these subjects were able to produce meaningful or original thoughts through written language, nor had they done so previously according to their past educational histories. The mildly mentally retarded subjects were able to produce meaningful thoughts, although discontinuous or disjointed, through written language.
3. Both mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents responded with little variance when asked the purpose of writing (i.e. Why do people write?). Writing was explained in terms of utilitarian-type behaviors (e.g. writing name; getting work done) as opposed to conveying what they thought. There was no indication from the moderately

mentally retarded subjects that meaning was communicated by their own print.

4. Spelling was generally correct or phonemically appropriate when both moderately and mildly mentally retarded subjects produced their names, addresses, or dates. The majority of the words in the lists, phrases, and sentences were spelled correctly; however, when deviations were noted for the moderately mentally retarded subjects, no evidence of "invented spelling," typical of younger CA children, was found.
5. The moderately mentally retarded adolescents demonstrated a developing awareness of written receptive language by exhibiting certain reading patterns: identification of a letter, identification of words, understanding the concept of page, indicating where reading in the text began, production of close matching between vocalized reading and text, sounding out words in unfamiliar text, using pictures as cues to meaning, etc. All mildly mentally retarded subjects demonstrated mastery on all of the 22 book handling knowledge skills that tapped their awareness of written receptive language.
6. Both the mildly and moderately mentally retarded subjects' expressed purposes for reading were far more diverse than those purposes expressed for writing. The purposes mentioned stressed pleasure, acquisition of knowledge, and functional utility. Their responses suggested more exposure and interaction with the reading process (e.g. older siblings doing homework, reading for pleasure).
7. All of the mildly mentally retarded adolescents and all but one of the moderately mentally retarded adolescents felt that learning to read and learning to read more effectively and efficiently would be easy. Other ideas mentioned were that learning to read and learning

to read more effectively and efficiently could be accomplished with help from the family and teachers, being exposed to books, learning books (memorization), spelling words, etc.

8. The mildly mentally retarded adolescents were able to spell their written productions with 40 to 83% accuracy and use correct capitalization patterns with 25 to 100% accuracy. All but three adolescents wrote their production in cursive while the other wrote in manuscript. Most commonly, the adolescents presented lists of words, phrases, single simple sentences with few examples of multiple sentences or complex sentence structures as writing. No moderately mentally retarded subject wrote any segment larger than a single word. While written production accuracy was quite high (80%) it was confined to rote repetitious behaviors as opposed to original print generation. Some of these adolescents demonstrated confusion between writing and drawing. Most confusion was evidenced when they were asked to verbally express differences between writing and drawing. Less confusion was demonstrated when they were asked to demonstrate drawing or writing.
9. The reading comprehension of the mildly mentally retarded subjects, as measured by retelling, was heavily dependent upon sight word idenification and utilization of the graphophonemic language cue system. The three moderately mentally retarded subjects who provided oral reading miscue data depended on the same strategies for gaining meaning from print but generated fewer and shorter retelling statements resulting in lower retelling scores (i.e., 20% compared to 45%).
10. The mildly mentally retarded adolescents utilized the graphophonemic language cue system to the almost complete exclusion of the syntax and semantic cue systems. The moderately mentally retarded readers

displayed the same word identification strategy but their oral reading was more heavily marked by repeated omissions of unknown words.

11. The mildly mentally retarded adolescent readers in this study did produce miscues involving use of the syntactic and semantic systems. Occasionally, reading behavior involving dialect would produce meaningful miscues. The high percentage, however, were miscues of partial graphic and partial sound similarity. While the three moderately mentally retarded readers did not display any qualitative differences from the mildly mentally retarded readers, they quantitatively differed in the number of substitution of unknown words with known words beginning with the same letter.
12. The mildly mentally retarded adolescents in this study produced a high percentage of semantically unacceptable miscues, and few attempts (i.e. $\bar{x}$ = <50%) were made to correct them. The moderately mentally retarded readers demonstrated a similarly high percentage of semantically unacceptable miscues but made quantitatively fewer attempts to correct them.

Implications and Applications

1. There is a need to infuse a practical awareness of reading and writing into the home environment. This effort by teachers to generalize this awareness into the home environment must be preceded by a strong, similar infusion into the classroom setting.
2. A wide variety of reading and writing materials should be readily available in quality and quantity to students at home. If this is economically not feasible, the school and the teacher can play an active direct service in providing those materials for use in the home.

3. Meaningful reading and writing should become an integral and systematic part of the adolescent's daily educational experiences. These efforts to provide meaningful language activities should parallel language goals and objectives in IEPs that emphasize normalized purposes for reading and writing.
4. Writing needs to be presented as a natural language activity and should be accepted in its present stage of development. Regardless of the student's CA, spelling accuracy should not take precedence over written production and creative, manipulation of written language when that developmental level is MA appropriate.
5. Numerous opportunities should be provided for a wide variety of reading and writing activities at school. These opportunities should not be confined to the reading, spelling and language periods.
6. Mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents should have the opportunity to spend uninterrupted time with printed material they enjoy. These opportunities can be provided through Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) (Goodman & Burke, 1980) or through teacher-directed Sustained Oral Reading (SOR) (Feldman, 1979; 1981).
7. Mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents need to see significant adults, siblings, and friends gain pleasure from reading. These observations can commence within the classroom setting under planned systematic procedures.
8. Meaningful reading experiences can be provided for mildly and moderately mentally retarded students in the instructional setting by incorporating practical, reality-based activities into the daily reading program.
9. Teachers must be assisted in becoming more influential persons in these adolescents' reading acquisition process. Inservice workshops

and programs can be designed to provide them with the skills to teach qualitative aspects of language to the mentally retarded. Teaching meaningful language skills may allow teachers to be perceived as a more active, responsible participant in the instructional-learning process.

10. Teachers should not overlook the possibility that some efficient instruction techniques may be suggested by both mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents (e.g. memory reading, exposure to print). These strategies may characterize their individual learning styles.
11. Encouragement of a mentally retarded adolescent's interest in print allows for development of functional uses of written communication. Letter writing, grocery lists and messages are all activities that would involve mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents in the functional use of print.
12. Natural interest in writing/spelling should be encouraged through functional activities (e.g., writing permission slips to go to the lavatory, producing request slips for checking out classroom materials for home use, and note taking activities). Writing opportunities can be accomplished in a non-threatening atmosphere where adolescents are free to practice, experiment, and explore print production and manipulation. These activities would help them increase their confidence and competence levels of writing and spelling behaviors. Planned generalization to the home environment can follow its practice and accomplishment in the classroom.
13. Reading for functional purposes as well as enjoyment and learning should be accomplished (e.g., recipes, TV guides, menus). Reading directions for games, newspaper comics, empty grocery boxes and containers, street signs and maps, and media commercials and announce-

ments all have direct and greater adaptive behavioral competence applications to more normalized community living for both mildly and moderately mentally retarded adolescents.

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Appendix A
Reading Interview

READING INTERVIEW

Name_____ Age_____ Date_____

Occupation_____ Education Level_____

Sex_____ Interview Setting_____

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?

   Do you ever do anything else?

2. Who is a good reader that you know? (Ask about teacher)

3. What makes her/him a good reader?

4. Do you think that s/he ever comes to something s/he doesn't know when s/he is reading?

5. Yes When s/he does come to something s/he doesn't know, what do you think s/he does about it?

   No Suppose that s/he does come to something that s/he doesn't pretend to know. What do you think s/he does about it?

6. If you know that someone was having difficulty reading how would you help that person?

7. What would a/your teacher do to help that person?

8. How did you learn to read?

   What did (they/you) do to help you learn?

9. What would you like to do better as a reader?

10. Do you think that you are a good reader? Yes___ No___

Additional Questions:

11. What do you read routinely? Like everyday or everyweek?

12. What do you like most of all to read?

13. Can you remember any special book or the most memorable thing you have ever read?

Appendix B

Book Handling Knowledge Assessment

Book Handling Knowledge Assessment

ITEM	ADMINISTRATION	INSTRUCTIONS	RESPONSE	CHILD'S RESPONSE
1.	Show book; title covered by hand. Flip over pages.	"What's this called?" "What's this thing?" If child answers with the name of the book, record and ask "What's (say name of book given by child?)"	"Book" "Story Book" "Story" Name of Book	
2.	Displaying book.	"What do you do with it?"	"Read it" "Look at it" "Tell it" "Open it"	
3.	Displaying book.	"What's inside it?"	"Story" "Picture" "Words" "Pages" "Letters" "Things"	
4.	Present wrong way up and back towards S.	"Show me the front of this book" "Take the book and open it so that we can read it together.	Any indication of front or first page.	
5.	Turn to page 3.	Hold on to a page and say "Show me a page in this book." "Is this a page?"	Point to page "Yes"	
6.	Give the book to child.	Read this to me.	Record all responses	
7.	If child doesn't read the back or does inappropriate book reading continue: give the book to the child. Read the first page.	I'm going to read you this story. You show me where to start reading." "Where do I begin?"	Indicates print on first page.	
8.	Turn to the next page.	"Show me the top of this page." "Show me the bottom of this page."	Indicates top edge or toward top. Indicates bottom of page or towards bottom.	

ITEM	ADMINISTRATION	INSTRUCTIONS	RESPONSE	CHILD'S RESPONSE
9.	Show the page to the child.	"Show me with your finger exactly where I have to begin reading."	Points to the first word on the page.	
10.	Show the page to the child.	"Show me with your finger which way I go, as I read this page."	Left to right, on the page.	
11.	Continue to show the page to the child.	"Where then?" (This may already have been done or stated in #9, if so credit but do not repeat.)	Top line to bottom line.	
12.	Read the page.	"You point to the story while I read it." (Read Slowly)	Exact matching of spoken word with written word. Close matching.	
13.	If there is prin. on both pages display the pages.	"Where do I go now?"	Points to the first line of print on the next page.	
14.	Read the next two pages. If possible turn to a page with print and a picture on it. Turn the book upside down without the child seeing you.	Can you or I read this now? Why or why not?		
15.	Show how to use masking card to close the "curtains" over the "window." (Use two pieces of black cardboard).	"Let's put some of the story in this window. I want to close the curtains like this until I can see just one letter." "Now just two letters."	One letter correct. Two letters correct.	

ITEM	ADMINISTRATION	INSTRUCTIONS	RESPONSE	CHILD'S RESPONSE
16.	Open "curtains"	"Now close it until we can see just one word."	1 word correct 2 words correct	
17.	Open "curtains"	"Show me the first letter in a word--any word."	First correct Last correct	
18.	Remove card	"Show me a capital letter any capital letter."	Points clearly to a capital letter. Points to any capital letter.	
19.	Read to end of story. Close book and pass it to the child.	"Show me the name of the book" or "Name of Story?"	Cover, fly-leaf or title page.	
20.	Leave the book with the child.	"Show me the beginning of the story." "Show me the end of the story."	Opens book to first page and points to the first line. Turns to last page and points to the last line.	
22.	Title page pointing	"It says here (Read title of the book) by...(Read the author's name)." "What does by...(say author's name) mean?"	"He wrote it." "He made up the story." "He made the book."	

Appendix C

Reading Miscue Inventory: Evaluation

Summary and Profile Sheet of Reader's Strengths

Miscue Analysis Summary Record Sheet

READING MISCUE INVENTORY: EVALUATION

by Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke
and Margaret Lindberg

WORD LEVEL SUBSTITUTION IN CONTEXT: EVALUATION

Evaluation of the following questions indicates whether the student is making appropriate use of grammatical function and of the graphophonic cueing system. Questions 1,2, and 3 are answered for only word level substitution miscues. Under column headed Text list the word that is involved in a substitution miscue. Next to it, under the column headed Reader list the word which the reader substituted. Answer the following questions for each of these pairs of words. If dialect is involved place a d next to the reader's substitution.

Q1. Graphic Similarity: How much do the two words look alike?

high	TWO of their three parts are similar. Beginning and middle Beginning and end Middle and end
some	ONE of their three parts is similar. Beginning of general configuarion. Middle End
none	NONE of their three parts are similar.

Q2. Sound Similarity: How much do the two words sound alike?

high	TWO of their three parts are similar. Beginning and middle Beginning and end Middle and end
some	ONE of their three parts is similar. Beginning of general configuaration Middle End

Q3. Gramatical Function: Is the grammatical function of the reader's word the same as the grammatical function of the text word? (To help answer this question read the text sentence with the reader's miscue in it).

same	The reader's miscue is the same grammatical function as the text word.
questionable	It is impossible to tell whether the grammatical function of the reader's miscue is the same or different from the grammatical function of the text.
different	The reader's miscue is a different grammatical function than the text word.

LANGUAGE SENSE: EVALUATION

Evaluation of the following two questions indicates the degree to which the reader is concerned with producing acceptable language as he reads. Questions 4 and 5 are answered for every sentence which contain one or more miscues. If the miscures exceed sentence boundaries include as many sentences as necessary to maintain the relationship of all the miscures caused by other miscues. To read for acceptability consider each sentence as the reader finally produced it. All corrected miscues or attempts at correction should be read as finally resolved by the reader. When there are no attempts at correction, the miscues should be read as produced. Miscues which are acceptable within the reader's dialect should be considered acceptable.

Number each sentence in the text and place the numbers for sentences containing miscues under the column headed Sentence Number. Next to this, in the column headed Number of Miscues, indicate the number of miscues contained in each of the sentences.

Q4. Syntactic Acceptability: Is the sentence involving the miscures syntactically (grammatically) acceptable in the story?

yes — When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader it is syntactically acceptable in the story.

no — When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader it is not syntactically acceptable in the story.

A5. Semantic Acceptability: Is the sentence involving the miscues semantically (meaning) acceptable in the story?

yes — When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader it is semantically acceptable in the story?

no — When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader it is not semantically acceptable in the story.

COMPREHENDING: EVALUATION

Evaluation of this question indicates the degree to which the reader changes the intended meaning of the author as he reads. Qeustion 6 is answered for every sentence which contains one or more miscues. To determine the degree of change the sentence is read as the reader finally produced it. All corrected miscues or attempts at correciton should be read as finally resolved by the reader. When there are no attempts at correction the miscue should be read as produced.

Q6. Meaning Change: Is there a change in meaning involved in the sentence?

no	When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader there is NO change in the intended meaning of the story.
minimal	When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader there is a change, inconsistency or loss to minor incidents, characters or sequences in the story.
yes	When the sentence is read as finally produced by the reader there is change, inconsistency or loss to major incidents, characters or sequences in the story.

SUMMARY AND PROFILE SHEET OF READER'S STRENGTHS

Reader's Name _____

1. The percentage of substitution miscues which indicate high Graphic and high Sound similarities.

   enter % Q1 high _____
   enter % Q2 high _____

   The percentage of substitution miscues which indicate Graphic and Sound similarities.

   enter % Q1 some _____
   enter % Q2 some _____
   combine Q1 high plus some _____
   combine Q2 high plus some _____

2. The percentage of substitution miscues which indicate similar Grammatical Function.

   enter % Q3 high _____

3. The percentage of instances that the reader produced syntactically acceptable sentences and/or corrected syntactically unacceptable sentences.

   enter % Q4 _____

4. The percentage of instances the reader produced semantically acceptable sentences and/or corrected semantically unacceptable sentences.

   enter % Q5 yes _____

5. The percentage of instances that the reader retained the author's meaning.

   enter % Q6 no change _____
   enter % Q6 minimal change _____
   combine Q6 no change plus Q6 minimal change _____

In order to obtain data about the following two areas of strength, it is necessary to return to the work sheet for the information. Read the sentence in which the miscue asked about occurs as if it were the only miscue in the sentence.

6. Relationship between graphic dissimilarity and meaning change substitution miscues with Graphic similarity marked "none" but where the miscues are either high quality miscues (indicate minimal or no change of meaning) or are corrected.

7. Relationship between grammatical function dissimilarity and syntactically acceptable substitution miscues with no Grammatical Function similarity but where the miscues are in structures which are syntactically acceptable or are corrected.

			Word Level Substitution in Context									Language Sense				Comprehending	
			Q1 Graphic			Q2 Sound			Q3 Gram. Func.								
NUMBER	READER	TEXT	High	Some	None	High	Some	None	Some	?	Different	Sent or Line Number	Number of Miscues	Q4 Syntactic Acceptability	Q5 Semantic Acceptability	Q6 Meaning Change: No	Q6 Meaning Change: Minimal
1																	
2																	
3																	
4																	
5																	
6																	
7																	
8																	
9																	
10																	
11																	
	Number of words in portion coded:	Column Total										Total Sents.	Total Miscues	Total Yes	Total Yes		
	M.P.H.W.:	Percentages															

Appendix D

Example of Teacher's Script for Miscue Analysis

Comprehension Assessment from Retelling

Retelling Outline

EXAMPLE OF TEACHERS SCRIPT FOR MISCUE ANALYSIS

THE LINE DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM

0801 Victor and Billy were brothers.
0802 "Look what you did!" said Victor to
0803 Billy one day. "You broke my plane!"
0804 "I didn't mean to," Billy said.
0805 Victor picked up his broken plane. "I
0806 told you not to get into my things," he
0807 said.
0808 "I just wanted to see it," Billy said.
0809 "This was my new plane!" Victor said.
0810 He took Billy by the arm. "Say you're
0811 sorry."
0812 "You can't make me say anything," said
0813 Billy.

0901 Victor took something out of his pocket.
0902 "See this roll of tape?" he said. "I'm
0903 going to put a line of tape right down the
0904 middle of the room!"
0905 "What for?" Billy wanted to know.
0906 "Wait and see," Victor said.
0907 Then Victor made a line with the tape
0908 right down the middle of the room.
0909 "Now," Victor said. "This is better."

"How come?" said Billy.

"Now you'll know which is your side and which is mine. I don't want you ever to step over that line. From now on, stay on your side!"

"Who cares?" Billy said.

When Victor got into bed that night, he forgot to turn off the light. Billy was still up.

"Hey, turn off the light, will you?" Victor asked.

"I can't," Billy said.

"What do you mean, you can't?" asked Victor.

"I can't!" Billy said. "I can't step over the line! The light is on your side."

"Oh, come on," said Victor.

"No!" said Billy. "I can't step over the tape. You said so yourself!"

Victor couldn't make Billy turn off the light.

off himself.

In the morning, Victor felt cold. He saw that the window was open.

"Shut the window, Billy. I'm cold," he said.

"Well, I'm not," said Billy.

"Shut that window or I will!"

Victor.

"Oh no, you won't!" Billy said. "This is my side of the room. Remember?"

Just then the wind blew in. It blew the papers off Billy's desk. They flew all over the room.

"Hey, shut the window," Victor shouted. "And pick up your papers!"

Billy shut the window. Then he turned to Victor and smiled.

"But I cona't pick the papers up,: he said.

"Why not?" asked Victor.

"You know why."

Victor looked at the line of tape going down the middle of the floor.

"Oh, that crazy line!" Victor said.

He got out of bed and pulled the tape off the floor.

And that was the end of the line down the middle of the room!

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Comprehension Through Story Retelling Following Oral Reading

Character recall and development:

Who else was in the story? Tell me about them. What was (name of key character) like?

Note: Use only those names or events to which the reader has already referred.

Events:

Can you think of anything else that happened?

Where did the story take place?

Plot:

Why did (name key event) happen?

Note: Use only those events to which the reader has already referred.

What was the problem the story was trying to solve?

How did the story make you feel? Why?

Theme:

What do you think the story was telling you?

Why do you think the author wanted to write this story?

Do you know any other stories that are trying to tell you the same thing?

RETELLING OUTLINE: THE LINE DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM

Character Analysis:

Victor

brothers

Billy

Events:

Billy breaks Victor's new plane.

Victor can't force Billy to say he is sorry.

Victor divides the room in half with tape and says each boy is to stay on his own side.

Victor gets into bed and asks Billy to turn off the lights.

Billy refuses because the lights are on Victor's side.

The next morning Victor is cold and asks Billy to close the window.

Billy refuses and won't let Victor cross the line to do it himself.

The wind blows Billy's papers all over the room.

Billy closes the window but refuses to pick the papers up because they fly to Victor's side of the room.

Victor removes the line.

Plot:

Will the line down the middle of the room solve the boys' problems?

Theme:

Boundary lines between people do not solve problems.

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